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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of :
Neuhaus et al. : DECISION ON PETITION
Application Number: 10/520681 :
Filing Date: 01/07/2005 :
Attorney Docket Number: :
2002P03767WOUS :

This is a decision on the petition filed on January 30, 2009, under 37 CFR 1.137(a),¹ to revive the above-identified application.

The petition is dismissed.

Any request for reconsideration of this decision must be submitted within **TWO (2) MONTHS** from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a)."

¹ A grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) must be accompanied by:

(1) the required reply, unless previously filed; In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In a nonprovisional utility or plant application filed on or after June 8, 1995, and abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may also be met by the filing of a request for continued examination in compliance with § 1.114. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof. In an application abandoned for failure to pay the publication fee, the required reply must include payment of the publication fee.

(2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(1);

(3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Director that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(a) was unavoidable; and

(4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.20(d)) required pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(c)).

The application became abandoned on July 16, 2008, for failure to timely file a response to the non-final Office action mailed on April 15, 2008, which set a three (3) month shortened statutory period for reply. No extensions of the time for reply in accordance with 37 CFR 1.136(a) were obtained. Notice of Abandonment was mailed on January 22, 2009.

Petitioners assert that the non-final Office action mailed on April 15, 2008, was never received. In support, a declaration has been provided by Tracey A. Daniel, counsel's Patent Assistant, stating that a search of the file jacket and docket record where the non-received Office communication would have been stored and entered was made and the search indicates that the Office communication was not received. The declaration states that a copy of the docket record where the non-received Office communication would have been entered had it been received and docketed, is attached hereto.

A review of the record indicates no irregularity in the mailing of the non-final Office action mailed on April 15, 2008, and in the absence of any irregularity in the mailing, there is a strong presumption that the non-final Office action mailed on April 15, 2008 was properly mailed to the address of record. This presumption may be overcome by a showing that the non-final Office action mailed on April 15, 2008 was not in fact received.

MPEP 711.03(c) states, in pertinent part:

In Delgar v. Schulyer, 172 USPQ 513 (D.D.C. 1971), the court decided that the Office should mail a new Notice of Allowance in view of the evidence presented in support of the contention that the applicant's representative did not receive the original Notice of Allowance. Under the reasoning of Delgar, an allegation that an Office action was never received may be considered in a petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment. If adequately supported, the Office may grant the petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment and remail the Office action. That is, the reasoning of Delgar is applicable regardless of whether an application is held abandoned for failure to timely pay the issue fee (35 U.S.C. 151) or for failure to prosecute (35 U.S.C. 133).

To minimize costs and burdens to practitioners and the Office, the Office has modified the showing required to establish nonreceipt of an Office action. The showing

required to establish nonreceipt of an Office communication must include a statement from the practitioner describing the system used for recording an Office action received at the correspondence address of record with the USPTO. The statement should establish that the docketing system is sufficiently reliable. It is expected that the record would include, but not be limited to, the application number, attorney docket number, the mail date of the Office action and the due date for the response.

Practitioner must state that the Office action was not received at the correspondence address of record, and that a search of the practitioner's record(s), including any file jacket or the equivalent, and the application contents, indicates that the Office action was not received. A copy of the record(s) used by the practitioner where the non-received Office action would have been entered had it been received is required.

A copy of the practitioner's record(s) required to show non-receipt of the Office action should include the master docket for the firm. That is, if a three month period for reply was set in the nonreceived Office action, a copy of the master docket report showing all replies docketed for a date three months from the mail date of the nonreceived Office action must be submitted as documentary proof of nonreceipt of the Office action. If no such master docket exists, the practitioner should so state and provide other evidence such as, but not limited to, the following: the application file jacket; incoming mail log; calendar; reminder system; or the individual docket record for the application in question.

(emphasis added)

At the outset, petitioner has not provided a statement from the practitioner to the effect that the the Office action was not received at the correspondence address of record, and that a search of the practitioner's record(s), including any file jacket or the equivalent, and the application contents, indicates that the Office action was not received. Rather, the statement provided is by counsel's Legal Assistant. Any renewed petition

should be accompanied by a proper statement made by the practitioner.

Petitioner has not provided a copy of the master docket for the firm, nor stated whether the docket record provided is a master docket.

A copy of the practitioner's record(s) required to show non-receipt of the Office action should include the master docket for the firm. That is, if a three month period for reply was set in the nonreceived Office action, a copy of the master docket report showing all replies docketed for a date three months from the mail date of the nonreceived Office action must be submitted as documentary proof of nonreceipt of the Office action. If no such master docket exists, the practitioner should so state and provide other evidence such as, but not limited to, the following: the application file jacket; incoming mail log; calendar; reminder system; or the individual docket record for the application in question.

Accordingly, the petition is dismissed, but such dismissal is without prejudice to reconsideration pending submission of the information requested above.

PETITION UNDER 37 CFR 1.137(a)

A grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) must be accompanied by:

(1) the required reply, unless previously filed; In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In a nonprovisional utility or plant application filed on or after June 8, 1995, and abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may also be met by the filing of a request for continued examination in compliance with § 1.114. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof.

In an application abandoned for failure to pay the publication fee, the required reply must include payment of the publication fee.

(2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(1);

(3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(a) was unavoidable; and

(4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.20(d)) required pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(c)).

The petition lacks item (3).

With regards to item (3), the Director may revive an abandoned application if the delay in responding to the relevant outstanding Office requirement is shown to the satisfaction of the Director to be "unavoidable".² Decisions on reviving abandoned applications on the basis of "unavoidable" delay have adopted the reasonably prudent person standard in determining if the delay was unavoidable:

The word 'unavoidable' . . . is applicable to ordinary human affairs, and requires no more or greater care or diligence than is generally used and observed by prudent and careful men in relation to their most important business. It permits them in the exercise of this care to rely upon the ordinary and trustworthy agencies of mail and telegraph, worthy and reliable employees, and such other means and instrumentalities as are usually employed in such important business. If unexpectedly, or through the unforeseen fault or imperfection of these agencies and instrumentalities, there occurs a failure, it may properly be said to be unavoidable, all other conditions of promptness in its rectification being present.³

The showing of record is inadequate to establish unavoidable delay within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 133 and 37 CFR 1.137(a).⁵ Specifically, an application is "unavoidably" abandoned only where petitioner, or counsel for petitioner, takes all action necessary for a proper response to the outstanding Office action, but through the intervention of unforeseen circumstances, such as failure of mail, telegraph, facsimile, or the negligence of

² 35 U.S.C. § 133.

³ In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497; 514-15 (1912) (quoting Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31, 32-33 (1887)); see also Winkler v. Ladd, 221 F. Supp. 550, 552, 138 USPQ 666, 167-68 (D.D.C. 1963), aff'd, 143 USPQ 172 (D.C. Cir. 1963); Ex parte Henrich, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141 (1913). In addition, decisions on revival are made on a "case-by-case basis, taking all the facts and circumstances into account." Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 USPQ 977, 982 (D.C. Cir. 1982). Finally, a petition cannot be granted where a petitioner has failed to meet his or her burden of establishing that the delay was "unavoidable." Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 316-17, 5 USPQ2d 1130, 1131-32 (N.D. Ind. 1987).

otherwise reliable employees, the response is not timely received in the Office.⁴

Petitioner's argument has been considered, but is not persuasive. Petitioner is responsible for the proper prosecution of his application. A delay resulting from the lack of knowledge or improper application of the patent statute, rules of practice or the MPEP does not constitute an "unavoidable" delay.⁵ A delay caused by an applicant's lack of knowledge or improper application of the patent statute, rules of practice or the MPEP is not rendered "unavoidable" due to: (1) the applicant's reliance upon oral advice from Office employees; or (2) the Office's failure to advise the applicant of any deficiency in sufficient time to permit the applicant to take corrective action.⁶

Petitioner asserts unavoidable delay because the non-final Office action mailed on April 15, 2008 was never received. As stated above, petitioner's showing that non-final Office action mailed on April 15, 2008 was never received is lacking because the requirements set forth in MPEP 711.03(c) to establish that an Office communication was never received have not been met. Accordingly, the showing of record does not support a finding that the delay was unavoidable. The petition must therefore be dismissed.

However, such dismissal is without prejudice to reconsideration pending submission of the information requested above (i.e., the statement by the practitioner and a master docket report) with any renewed petition.

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

By mail: Mail Stop Petition
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

⁴ Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31 (Comm'r Pat. 1887).

⁵ See Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 317, 5 USPQ2d 1130, 1132 (N.D. Ind. 1987), Vincent v. Mossinghoff, 230 USPQ 621, 624 (D.D.C. 1985); Smith v. Diamond, 209 USPQ 1091 (D.D.C. 1981); Potter v. Dann, 201 USPQ 574 (D.D.C. 1978); Ex parte Murray, 1891 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 130, 131 (1891).

⁶ See In re Sivertz, 227 USPQ 255, 256 (Comm'r Pat. 1985); see also In re Colombo, Inc., 33 USPQ2d 1530, 1532 (Comm'r Pat. 1994) (while the Office attempts to notify applicants of deficiencies in their responses in a manner permitting a timely correction, the Office has no obligation to notify parties of deficiencies in their responses in a manner permitting a timely correction).

By FAX: (571) 273-8300
Attn: Office of Petitions

By hand: Customer Service Window
Mail Stop Petition
Randolph Building
401 Dulany Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Telephone inquiries concerning this matter may be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3231.



Douglas I. Wood
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